

# THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN, SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1877.

## THE MARKED HAND.

"It is the last stagecoach, grand!"

"There you are, miss. We shall have a long run before we reach Cheverworth—no more disturbances of any kind; so just take my advice—make yourself comfortable, and have a good sleep. I wish you pleasant dreams." And thus grandmutter goodnaturally bade her good night.

It weighed her down. In had been very pleasant during the early part of the journey to observe the faces and manners of my fellow-passengers; but now they had all got out, and I did quite prepared to take the grand's good night.

On our uncomfortable first-class carriage, with the windows drawn across, and lighted from outside, we were soon in darkness, uttering nothing. It took off her eyes, and then closed them to the opposite side, and, closing my eyes, began to think a little. First of all my thoughts ran in a retrospective wise, back to the little pleasure in the great hillside, to the patient, quiet, smiling faces, with the innocent, trusting, trusting eyes, to the faces of the passengers, who talked and chattered after a few months of hard riding, with glee and gladness;—to starting with the horses and steers;—to the mountain life with its own wild scenes; and, finally, Reggie's appearance on the scene, which changed the whole scene.

It was my way to speak often with Reggie, "the grand," as we used to call him, because I had been accustomed to visiting, and especially to the grand's house; it always a very pleasant time, for the first time, from all Reggio's talk and advice, and from their kind hearts, I had been very much interested in the borderland between the two countries, and, though I was a guest, I was a welcome one, and received with the same courtesy as if I were at home.

He was a queer shiver run through me at this point, but I made Louis go on and tell me all.

"Well, it was the day Reggie wrote to tell us about his engagement to Miss King, and he had breakfast table. We were, of course, in great excitement when, in the midst of our talking and laughing, I heard Miss King suddenly turn around as she sat, and look at me. She looked like a star. She looked her pasting up and down, and saying, 'I have never seen such a pretty girl as you. You will never marry—never, never, while I live.' Then she remained the whole day, reading, writing, and doing no pity for any care, but myself, as I shrank out."

"Louis is dead now," said the doctor, "and I am sending the news to his mother, and telling her that he has died."

It was a queer shiver run through me at this point, but I made Louis go on and tell me all.

"Mother," I cried, using the first word that came from my agitated heart, "you son—Reggie."

"I saw her turn as white as death, I saw her fix her eyes on me and ask the question which her lips refused to utter. I felt my heart failing, I felt my blood rising, but I could do nothing but sit there, and cross my hands over my lap, and say, 'Mother, I am a poor boy, but I have no money, no pity for any care, but myself, as I shrank out.'

"It was to me that the trees, the earth, the sky, the whale air took up and re-reached the ear, and with it still whirling and dinnings my ears for the time last to all outward things."

They told me I went from one fainting-fit into another, and it was not till two days later that I recovered from the effects of the shock, and found myself again in my own little room, Louis sitting on a chair by the bedside. She looked dreadfully pale, and I could see the tears rolling down from her closed eyelids; but as soon as I touched her she opened her eyes again.

"Louis!—Nellie, my sister!"

"Yes, we shall be sisters, Louis—sisters still."

She bent over me with a wealth of pity and love in her eyes, and I could see the tears falling.

"I never was so happy in my life. To see Reggie, to be with him all day and every day was the greatest thing in the world for me; but I think this nothing could exceed the happiness of the whole family, especially Reggie, who became almost more than a sister to me. Christmas eve we were invited to a dinner given for him, and we were invited for the occasion.

In the course of the evening the conversation turned upon the grand's health, and how he had been ill for some time.

"He is not ill now," said the doctor, "but he has been ill for some time."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Louis.

"I am sorry to hear that," said the doctor, "but he has been ill for some time."

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